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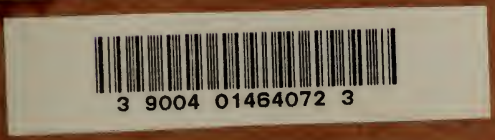

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EDUCATIONAL TRACTS FOR THE TIMES.

No. I.

Shall our Higher Education be Christian or Infidel?

BY THE

REV. A. SUTHERLAND, D.D.

"Any system of school training which sharpens and strengthens the intellectual powers, without at the same time affording a source of restraint und countercheck to their tendency to evil, is a curse rather than a blessing."—VICTOR COUSIN.

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NOTE.—Having reason to believe that large numbers of thoughtful men, whose opinions seldom find expression through the Press of the country, are in substantial accord with the views expressed in this Tract, the Author invites correspondence from such on the general question, and the best means of securing the desired end. Correspondents will oblige by intimating whether their letters are to be regarded as private, or otherwise.

☞ Copies of the Tract will be supplied at cost to any who may think it worthy of general circulation.

EDUCATIONAL TRACTS FOR THE TIMES.

No. I.

SHALL OUR HIGHER EDUCATION BE CHRISTIAN OR INFIDEL?

BY THE REV. ALEXANDER SUTHERLAND, D.D.

AT intervals for more than fifty years the question of Higher Education has agitated the thought of this country, and passing events seem to indicate that once more it must be the subject of careful enquiry. Within the next decade—perhaps half that time—important questions affecting the educational policy of the country, especially of Ontario, will have to be settled, and a direction will be given to the currents of scholarship that in after years will be very hard to turn. It is important, therefore, that the currents now set in motion be guided in safe directions, and that the policy adopted be such as will conserve the best interests of the State. The real facts must be brought to light; the prejudice that has enshrouded the question must be dispersed; the principles which are to underlie and guide our educational policy must be discussed, and a safe path marked out, if possible, for the future. In a word, the all-important question of Higher Education must be settled in such wise as shall meet the just demands of the people at large, and bring the advantages of liberal culture, under the best and safest auspices, within reach of the largest number of the young men—and young women too—of the nation.

Waiving subordinate points and side-issues, the great questions to be settled are these:—

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1. Shall Higher Education be entirely secular, or shall the religious element, in the form of Christian evidences and Christian ethics, be incorporated with the educational system of the country ?

2. Can the work of Higher Education be done most efficiently by several independent universities, each with its own affiliated schools, or by a single university with confederated colleges ?

3. Is it the duty of Government to provide entirely for the Higher Education of the country, or merely to aid and encourage independent universities in providing for it ?

Each of the preceding questions is important ; each is worthy of discussion ; but I shall confine myself, in the present paper, to the first of the three. So far as this aspect of the problem is concerned, we live in perilous times. In some quarters there is not merely a disposition to undervalue the religious element in education, there is a disposition to ignore it altogether,—to separate it utterly from our educational system,—to cast it out as unworthy a place in the *curricula* of our universities. Men sometimes speak of "Science *and* Religion," or "Culture *and* Religion," as though they were things entirely separate and distinct ; while some speak of the "conflict" of science and religion, and others try to "reconcile" science and religion, as if they were positively antagonistic. The thought is misleading ; the divorce is unnatural. Culture and religion are not antagonistic ; the one is the completion, or, rather let me say, the one is the soul of the other.

I do not propose to *defend* the religious element in education. With those who understand the question it needs no defence, but at once commends itself by its adaptation to the needs of the human mind. A non-Christian system of education needs defence, and in the near future will require all the arguments that can be mustered in its support. It has been too much the fashion to treat what has been justly called a godless education with great deference, as though it were master of the situation, and could dictate its own terms. I repudiate the concession. A national system of education which excludes the religious element is a national wrong, and I do not hesitate to impeach it as a standing menace to national freedom and national stability, dangerous alike to the individual and to the State.

I. A Non-Christian Education is Defective.

In the nature of things it must be so, because it omits a vast amount of important truth. Considering the wide range of subjects open for investigation, human life is far too short to master them all; but while we may be compelled to omit some—perhaps many—subjects from the *curricula* of our universities, we should see to it that the most important are included, and if character is to count for anything, there is no subject in the whole range of human studies that compares, in point of importance, with the great truths of God, and duty, and destiny. If life were limited to the few years we spend here, a subject more or less in a course of study might be of little moment; but those who plan for a purely secular education, leave out the tremendous fact of man's immortality, and thus make a huge mistake at the very start. If man were only a superior animal, something might be said in favour of purely secular education; but with an immortal nature to be trained and developed, what can be said for a system which expends its efforts upon one part of man's complex nature, leaving the higher and more important part untouched and uncared for? It is a trite saying that "knowledge is power," but it is a power for good only as it is controlled by religious truth, which fills the mind with the noblest conceptions of God, of personal responsibility, and of a future state.

The most serious defect in a non-Christian education is that it supplies no adequate force for the development of moral character. If it be said that intellectual culture is sufficient for this purpose, I need only reply in the words of Herbert Spencer—a by no means partial witness—that "the belief in the moralizing effects of intellectual culture, flatly contradicted by facts, is absurd." If it be said that æsthetic culture is a sufficient substitute, I call upon John Ruskin—no mean authority—to reply, and this is his answer: "The period of perfect art is the period of decline. At the moment when a perfect picture appeared in Venice, a perfect statue in Florence, a perfect fresco in Rome, from that hour forward, probity, industry, and courage were exiled from their walls." And if it be said that our colleges and universities should confine themselves strictly to secular topics, leaving religious truth to the Church and the Sunday-school, I cite Victor Cousin to the

stand, and I hear him testify that "any system of school training which sharpens and strengthens the intellectual powers, without at the same time affording a source of restraint and countercheck to their tendency to evil, is a curse rather than a blessing."

II. A Non-Christian Education is Untrue.

The primary object of all true education is to teach the individual mind to *think;* and this ability to think should be made to pervade universal society. If we have labourers, their pickaxes and shovels should think; if we have artizans, their spindles and shuttles should think; if we have mechanics, their saws and planes, their anvils and hammers, their mallets and chisels, should think; and, more important still, if we have voters their ballots should think. But while it is important that men should think, it is far more important that they should think true thoughts; and our colleges and universities must largely decide whether the thought of the future shall be false or true.

Now, I maintain that no man can think truly on any important subject who has not learned to think as a Christian, because without this qualification he is as one who omits the chief facts from his data, and the major premise from his argument. Does a man think truly in natural science who sees in all the phenomena of matter only the play of natural forces, and in its combinations only a fortuitous concourse of atoms? Does he think truly in history who never sees God's finger in the destinies of nations, nor hears His footfall in the march of the centuries? Does he think truly in anatomy or physiology, who sees no evidence of Divine wisdom in the human frame, so "fearfully and wonderfully made?" I trow not. And as he does not think truly who excludes God from his thinking, so neither does he teach truly. He teaches only half-truths at best, and a half-truth is often as pernicious as a positive lie.

III. A Non-Christian Education Tends toward Infidelity and Atheism.

This must be its tendency in the nature of things; this is its tendency as matter of fact. We must remember that education is carried on by a two-fold process,—the knowledge communi-

eated and the impressions produced. The one largely determines what the student shall *know;* the other determines what he shall *become.* Now what are the impressions that will inevitably be left upon the mind of a youth by an education that is purely secular? As a rule, the impressions will be that religion is a very secondary matter; that it has no legitimate connection with mental development; that it is out of place in the spheres of philosophy and science, and is antagonistic to the advanced thought of the age. If, under these circumstances, a student retains his belief in the Bible, and his reverence for God and religion, it is not *because* of his education, but *in spite* of it.

Some, I am aware, maintain a contrary opinion; but they overlook most important facts. They seem to take for granted that a human mind is but like a glass vessel in which a certain quantity of something we call "knowledge" is stored, which can be drawn upon at pleasure, but which has no effect upon the texture of the vessel; that whether the contents are healthful food, corrosive acids, or deadly poison, the glass remains uninjured. This is a terrible mistake. Knowledge introduced into, and impressions made upon, the mind do not remain distinct from it. They are woven into the very texture, so to speak, of the mind itself, giving new directions to thought, new colourings to our perceptions of truth, and a new bias to the moral nature. Moreover the years usually spent in college are the very years when the human mind receives its most decisive bent; when teaching, combined with surrounding influences, will do most to determine what the future character shall be,—the years, in a word, when thought crystallizes into lasting conviction; when a permanent direction is given to moral tendencies; when habits both of thinking and acting receive a bias which is not easily changed.

As a rule, the influence of purely secular colleges has been disastrous upon the thought of those who have been educated in them. I say as a rule, because there are exceptions to this rule as to every other. But the exceptions have been where colleges, entirely secular as regards the *curriculum,* have been manned by Christian professors whose character and influence compensated, to some extent at least, for the absence of religious truth from

the course of study. But where this compensating element is not found, the effects are always disastrous. If some reader suggests that my theory is contradicted by facts, I sadly answer, Not so; the facts prove my theory, as they who have given careful attention to the subject know right well. This is the case in the United States, where some prominent State universities have become so notoriously anti-Christian in their influence that I am told, on good authority, it is almost an exception for a student to go through the course without having his religious faith undermined, or at least greatly shaken. In India similar results have happened on a large scale. In that country colleges and a university were established, from which all Christian teaching was rigorously excluded. Western philosophy and science soon upheaved the foundations of Eastern superstition, and heathenism among the students tottered to its fall. But alas! the education which was digging, really though unintentionally, at the foundations of heathenism, put nothing better in its place, and so disastrous have been the results that, within a few years, leaders of thought in India, including persons high in office, have been discussing the advisableness of handing over the State colleges to the Churches, as the only means of saving the country from the leadership of a generation of educated atheists.

IV. A Non-Christian Education is Fraught with Peril to the State.

The foundation of national safety is national virtue, the moral sentiments of the people, rectitude in the private life of the citizen. But moral sentiments and moral rectitude must be sustained by adequate moral forces, and these Christianity alone supplies. To quote the emphatic language of Washington,—"Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles." All history testifies that intellectual culture is no safeguard from moral vileness, ending in national degeneration and decay. Egypt, once in the van of civilization and learning, is to-day "the basest of nations," and the once mighty empires of Greece and Rome tell the same sad story. Where shall we find such philosophy, such oratory, such art, as in the land that gave to the world a Homer, a Pericles, a Demosthenes, an Aristotle?

Where shall we find such jurisprudence, such statesmanship, such eloquence, as in the empire that could boast of a Justinian, a Cæsar, a Cicero, and a Tully? But where are Greece and Rome to-day? They have fallen. Their civilization lacked the conserving element: the salt was without savour, and was cast out to be trodden under feet of men.

Such examples are full of warning. The causes which led to national downfall then, are in operation to-day, and history may repeat herself nearer home than we apprehend. If our civilization is to be progressive and permanent; if our institutions are to rest upon solid foundations; if freedom is to

> "Broaden slowly down
> From precedent to precedent;"

if our liberties are to rest secure in the guardianship of public morality, our colleges and universities, where the leaders of thought are trained, must be permeated through and through with the principles of New Testament Christianity. In the words of De Tocqueville,—"Despotism may govern without religious faith, but liberty cannot." A lofty morality is the only sufficient safeguard of the liberties of a free people, but "morality," says Dr. J. P. Newman, "without God as its authoritative reason, is but a social compact, a human stipulation, to be broken at will or enforced against will."

If I were considering the case of a pagan nation, my proposition would be conceded almost without demur. Let us take Japan as an illustration. There a vast nation has suddenly awakened from centuries of intellectual slumber. They have thrown open their gates to Western civilization, and the most marked feature of the awakening is a universal craving for education,—a craving so strong that to satisfy it the Government has organized a system of education embracing more than 50,000 Common Schools, a number of High Schools, Normal Training Schools for both men and women, and an Imperial University, said, by those who know the facts, to be equal in its equipment and in the ability of its professors to Oxford or Cambridge. The most superficial thinker cannot fail to see that these schools and colleges will be mighty factors in moulding the national character, and that they will largely determine what the future of

the nation is to be. If now I submit the question,—"Ought Japan to have an education purely secular, or one permeated throughout by Christian truth and Christian influences?" scarce anyone will hesitate to reply, "The hope of Japan is in Christian education."

If, then, a purely secular education is unsafe for the awakening intellect of a heathen nation, on what principle is it safe for the growing intellect of a professedly Christian nation? unless it be on the supposition that we have advanced so far as to have no further need of God. It is confessed that when laying the foundations of an abiding civilization, an education with the savour of Christian truth is good; but some appear to think that so soon as the nation has got beyond its infancy, the savour can safely be dispensed with. "Be not deceived: God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man"—or a nation—"soweth, that shall he also reap;" and the nation that sows the wind of a godless education, must reap the whirlwind of a swift and hopeless decay.

V. What is "Religious" Education?

Holding, as I do, the views already indicated, it need hardly be said that I plead for religious education in our colleges and universities. But let me not be misunderstood. What is "religious" education? Not *sectarian* education, as some would have us believe; though, for that matter, I would rather have my boy taught by the most pronounced sectarian, provided he were a godly man, than by the most brilliant professor who ruled Christ and the Bible out of his lecture-room. The cry against "sectarian" education has been made to do duty on more than one occasion in the history of this country. Some have used it ignorantly, some thoughtlessly, and some for a purpose,—that is, as a convenient way of exciting prejudice against a movement that gave promise of competing successfully with an educational monopoly, and of placing the advantages of higher culture, under religious auspices, within reach of all. But I plead for religious—not sectarian—education; for there may be quite a difference between the two.

Further, by "religious" I do not mean *theological* education.

This is another mistake made by many: they confound religion with theology, and then seem to regard theology as something to be kept distinct from other studies and pursuits; and so they say, let our sons get their education in secular colleges, and then let the Churches have their theological schools in which to teach religion to those who are preparing for the Christian ministry. I deprecate the misapprehension, as it is with some; I protest against the misrepresentation, as it is with others. The religious education for which we plead does not mean the study of sectarian theology. What, then, it may be asked, do you mean by religious education? I mean—

1. Colleges and universities under Christian oversight and control.

2. Chairs occupied by Christian professors in all the departments.

3. A *curriculum* which, while providing for the highest intellectual culture, does not overlook the moral nature, but embraces at least these fundamentals of religious truth—Christian evidences and Christian ethics.

VI. Such an Education is an Urgent Need of the Times.

I plead for such a system for the sake of our sons. If we knew that a year hence those sons, in crossing a wide and deep river, would be suddenly plunged into its rushing current, the knowledge would change some of our plans, at least, in regard to their training. Not a day would be lost in teaching them to swim, and perhaps not satisfied with this we would provide the best life-preservers money could buy, and would have the lads carefully instructed how to use them. The illustration is none too strong. In a few years our boys will be plunged into a sea where they must swim or drown, and where nothing but fixed religious principles will have buoyancy enough to keep their heads above water, and sustain them until they reach the other side. Our sons, as they go forth to life's great battle, must face the same problems and grapple with the same foes that we have had to encounter. Shall we, then, send them forth unprepared,—utterly unarmed and defenceless? Oh, surely not! But will an education that is purely secular supply

the needed armour of proof? Nay; nothing but "the armou of righteousness on the right hand and on the left" can pos sibly shield them in the strife. If my statements seem extra vagant, listen at least to the words of Professor Huxley, whon one is almost surprised to find on this side of the question— "There must be moral substratum to a child's education to make it valuable, and there is no other source from which this can be obtained at all comparable to the Bible."

You may ask what difference it makes who teaches my boy chemistry, biology, anatomy, astronomy, or the like. It may make a tremendous difference, both in regard to *what* he is taught and *how* it is taught; for often the tone and spirit of a professor goes farther than the instruction he gives in determining what a student shall become. In that most critical period of life when intellect is fairly awaking; when the youth is just becoming conscious of the mental power that has been slumbering within him; when he longs to explore new and untried regions; when he craves a wider freedom, and regards with suspicion whatever claims authority over his thoughts or actions; when he begins to regard intellectual culture as the highest possible good, and looks up to his professors as incarnations of wisdom, from whose *dicta* there can be no appeal; at such a time the teaching and influence of the lecture-room may make all the difference between moral safety and moral shipwreck.

If, for example, my boy is engaged in the study of biology, does it make no difference whether he hears from his professor's lips that God is the only Author and Giver of life, or is told that life, so far from being a Divine gift, is only a spontaneous generation from lifeless matter? If he is studying the structure and laws of the human frame, does it make no difference whether he is taught to recognize Divine power and wisdom in the marvellous adaptation of means to ends, saying with the Psalmist, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made. . . . Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them;" or, on the other hand, is taught to believe that he is but the product of a blind Force; that he came, by some unlucky accident, from the

rkness of the past, and is speeding swiftly toward the deeper rkness beyond? If he is studying the wonders of the starry uni- rse, does it make no difference whether the lectures to which listens be in the spirit of the Psalmist's confession, "The avens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth is handiwork;" or in the spirit of the French atheist who said, The heavens declare only the glory of Laplace and Leverrier?" n! yes; it does make a difference,—an incalculable difference, a difference that can be measured only by celestial diameters. I plead for religious education for the sake of the nation. atthew Arnold has told us that the hope of the world is in its ges and its saints. In other words, Wisdom and Righteousness e the twin forces to save society from corruption and decay. The mark is good, though not particularly original. The principle as recognized by God, if not by man, far back in human history. en righteous men would have saved Sodom; the seven thou- nd who had not bowed the knee to Baal were the conserving rce in Israel; and this consensus of Old Testament teaching is nphasized and confirmed in the New by the declaration of hrist concerning His disciples, "Ye are the salt of the rth."

The future of this nation will depend upon the extent to which l its institutions—social, commercial, political—are permeated y religious principles, and this, in turn, will depend upon the lucation we give our sons and daughters. He must be blind ideed who sees no necessity for higher and better principles in oth political and commercial life. Unless there be improve- ent in these directions, the future forebodes disaster. Nay, nless a powerful conserving element can be infused, there is no rospect before us but universal corruption and dishonesty. If his be so, it may be said the Churches are to blame. Perhaps o; and they are to blame, if at all, just because they are suffer- ng the education of our young men to become non-Christian,—a ure prelude to its becoming anti-Christian. This is where the emedy must be applied: religious principles must be inwoven vith the moral fibre of our young men in the process of ducation, and not be put on as a convenient veneering after- vards.

The issues are far more serious than most persons seem to know. The real question as between the Christian and the infidel in this land is not the inspiration of the Bible, and the thousand and one questions which grow out of that; but it is whether the spirit of our educational system is to be secular or religious, and whether it is to be controlled by the Christian or by the infidel? Some one may say I am putting this too strongly; that there are numbers of people who are by no means infidels, and even many who claim to be Christians, who think that religion is out of place in school or college. But a moment's reflection will show that such persons, whether consciously or not, are putting themselves on the infidel's platform, and are reasoning along his lines. The only difference is, that while he perceives the logical outcome of his argument, the others do not. He demands a purely secular education; they join with him, though not with the same end in view; but while the methods are alike, the results cannot be widely different. He would have a nation of atheists, made such by their education; they would have a nation of Christians, who are such in spite of their education. He would annihilate all belief in the existence of a personal God—all respect for His character—all reverence for His law; they would retain these things in the church and the home, though joining to exclude them from the college and the school. But the result is the same. Between them both, Christ must seek the shelter of the manger, because there is no room for Him in the inn. He must be relegated to the companionship of the ignorant and the lowly, because they can find no room for Him in the misnamed culture of this age.

VII. How can such an Education be Secured?

If we are to have the Christian element recognized in Higher Education, we must have colleges and universities planted upon Christian foundations and under Christian control. In colleges endowed and controlled by the State, the religious element must be ignored. They can take no account of it either in authorizing the *curriculum* or in appointing the professors. But may not the professors in a State college be Christian men? Assuredly they *may* be, but we have no guarantee that they *will*

be. Such appointments will be made—unless party considerations intervene—solely on the ground of ability to teach the required branches, viewed from a purely secular standpoint, and the religious character or views of the candidate cannot be considered at all. Moreover, in the sudden changes which result from party government, it is quite within the possibilities that we may some day have a Minister of Education who would regard religious skepticism as a recommendation rather than an objection, and hence the Chair that is filled by a Christian to-day may be filled by an atheist to-morrow.

But how can we have Christian colleges? Only through the Churches. How can they be adequately endowed and sustained? *Chiefly by private liberality.* It is held by some—perhaps by many—that it is the duty of the State to provide every requisite for Higher Education. I question the correctness of the theory, as I do the soundness of the policy. That it is the duty of the State to provide for *primary* education, and even to make it compulsory, is clear, because illiteracy is the prolific parent of vice and crime; but in the matter of Higher Education, which partakes somewhat of the character of a luxury, it may be the duty of the State to aid and encourage it, but not to provide for it entirely. State aid should be an encouragement to private benevolence, not a substitute for it; and grants of public money for Higher Education should be conditioned, both in direction and amount, by the principle of helping those who help themselves.

It is possible that these lines may be read by some who recognize the solemn trust of stewardship, and who sincerely desire so to fulfil the trust that at the last the "well done" of the Master will be theirs. Sometimes, perhaps, you are in doubt as to the best way of investing your Lord's money, so that it may yield the largest returns in glory to God and good to men, because you see that much that is given in charity, so called, seems to produce no good, or at least no lasting, results. Far be it from me to dissuade you from helping the poor because results seem so small; but I would fain show you "a more excellent way," and it is this: Let a portion of your wealth be given to aid in endowing Christian colleges and universities, and thus put in operation agencies that will work for the good of thousands long after you have

passed to your reward. Ye give your money in daily charity, and ye do well; but the dole of to-day will be spent ere to-morrow, and the effect upon society is *nil.* Ye help to provide refuges for the destitute, and homes for God's suffering poor, and ye do well; but although the suffering inmates are sheltered and comforted, they send no healthful influence abroad, and the grace of your benefaction is unfelt beyond the narrow circle that shared the benefit. Ye leave wealth to your children, and they *may* use it wisely; but, on the other hand, the wealth you laboured to accumulate may be wasted by others on sinful indulgences; the fortune which held in it unmeasured possibilities of blessing, may prove a corroding curse, and the fruit that seemed so fair may, like apples of Sodom, turn to caustic ashes on the lip. But he who endows a Chair in a Christian university, like one who digs a well in a desert, unseals a fountain whose perennial waters shall refresh the weary while passing centuries march their rounds. He may die, but his work shall live, and its power to bless shall grow with each revolving sun. He may pass from toil to rest, from labour to reward, but he leaves behind him a long succession of representatives,—Christian teachers who shall send forth generations of men wise in all the wisdom of the schools, and loyal to the heart's core to Christ and His truth; and thus the benefits shall multiply till he who sowed the seed shall reap the harvest with vast and abiding increase.

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